

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003186/25**  
**to the Commission**  
**Petra Steger (PfE)**  
(6 August 2025)

*Subject:* Chinese laser attack on German reconnaissance aircraft taking part in EU-led ASPIDES operation

On 2 July 2025, while taking part in the EU-led ASPIDES operation in the Red Sea, a German reconnaissance aircraft was blinded without reason or warning by a military laser from a Chinese naval vessel. The mission had to be aborted and an emergency landing made in Djibouti. This highly charged incident raises alarms over the significant risk of escalation in terms of political security associated with EU-led military operations abroad.

Militarily neutral Member States such as Austria are increasingly wondering whether the EU's security policy strategy does not already de facto imply shared responsibility or political involvement. Furthermore, the Commission has yet to independently inform the public about the incident, which raises serious doubts about transparency and political accountability in EU-led military operations abroad.

1. What information does the Commission have about the laser attack, and when does it intend to disclose it to the public?
2. What political and diplomatic consequences has it imposed on China?
3. In the light of this incident, what is its assessment of the international and democratic legitimacy of the EU-led ASPIDES operation, and what is its response to the growing concerns about neutral Member States, such as Austria, increasingly being drawn into geopolitical conflicts?

Submitted: 6.8.2025

**Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission**  
(30 September 2025)

On 2 July 2025, a Chinese frigate (which had been previously observed sailing in the same area of operation), has targeted a German aircraft taking part in Operation EUNAVFOR ASPIDES<sup>(1)</sup> and performing a routine reconnaissance flight over the Gulf of Aden with a laser. EUNAVFOR ASPIDES is an EU maritime operation contributing to ensure freedom of navigation and the protection of commercial ships in the Red Sea.

The German aircraft (type Beechcraft 350) is a multi-sensor platform used for reconnaissance mission and has been operating since October 2024 in EUNAVFOR ASPIDES.

The Chinese frigate took this hostile action without prior communication. The laser damaged the camera of the plane. The mission flight was aborted as a precaution and the aircraft landed safely at a base in Djibouti.

The European External Action Service (EEAS) summoned the Ambassador of China to the EU in order to request clarifications. The EEAS noted that the EU expects China to understand the gravity of the event and prevent any similar event to occur again. The EEAS stressed that as the aircraft concerned was deployed within EUNAVFOR ASPIDES, the event was a direct concern to the EU as a whole.

Decisions relating to the EU Common Security and Defence Policy, including its missions and operations, are taken by the Council of the EU by unanimity — including Austria.

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<sup>(1)</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eunavfor-operation-aspides\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eunavfor-operation-aspides_en).